

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Canceled).
2. (Canceled).
3. (currently amended) A method for detecting a protease in a biological sample,

said method comprising:

(1) contacting one of two or more substantially continuous slices of a biological sample with a dried thin membrane which comprises a protease substrate together with a cross-linking ~~hardening~~-agent formed on a surface of a support;

(2) contacting the remaining slices with a dried thin membrane which comprises a protease substrate, a cross-linking ~~hardening~~-agent, and a protease inhibitor formed on a surface of a support;

(3) detecting traces of digestion formed on the dried thin membranes by the action of protease; and

(4) comparing the trace of digestion on the dried thin membrane used in step (1) with the trace of digestion on the dried thin membrane used in step (2).

4. (Canceled).

5. (currently amended) A method for detecting a protease in a sample, said method comprising:

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(1) contacting a sample with a dried thin membrane which comprises at least the following two layers: layer (a) which contains a protease substrate, a cross-linking ~~hardening~~ agent, and a protease inhibitor formed on a surface of a support, and layer (b) which contains a protease substrate and a cross-linking ~~hardening~~-agent laminated on layer (a);

(2) detecting traces of digestion formed on the dried thin membrane by the action of protease; and

(3) comparing the trace of digestion on layer (a) with the trace of digestion on layer (b).

6-18. (Canceled).